UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/19
10 June 1994

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH/SPANISH/
ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Forty-sixth session
Item 8 of the provisional agenda

THE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Interim report on human rights and extreme poverty, prepared by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Leandro Despouy

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
Introduction	1 - 17	3
I. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITION OF EXTREME POVERTY	18 - 32	5
A. Terminology	18 - 19	5
B. Definition	20 - 32	6
II. THE EVIL OF POVERTY	33 - 58	8
A. The scale of the phenomenon of poverty	33 - 40	8
B. Living conditions of people in extreme poverty	41 - 55	9
C. The causes of extreme poverty and policies to eradicate it	56 - 58	11

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
III.	WORK OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ON EXTREME POVERTY	59 - 122	12
	A. United Nations bodies	61 - 87	12
	B. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies	88 - 119	17
	C. Other international organizations	120 - 122	23
IV.	A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO EXTREME POVERTY	123	24
V.	THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR'S PLAN OF WORK	124	24

Annexes

I.	Questionnaires prepared for the consultation undertaken by the Special Rapporteur	25
II.	Excerpts from the statement by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, at the commemoration of the International Day of the Family	30
III.	Table. The extent of poverty in the developing countries in 1995	31

Introduction

1. In 1992, in resolution 1992/11, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Sub-Commission to undertake a study of this question and to entrust it to a Special Rapporteur whose mandate it defined. Also in 1992, in resolution 1992/27, the Sub-Commission decided to appoint Mr. Leandro Despouy as Special Rapporteur on the question of human rights and extreme poverty. The Commission on Human Rights endorsed his appointment in its resolution 1993/13.

2. Resolution 1992/11 of the Commission on Human Rights stipulates that the study is to concern, in particular, "the following aspects:

(a) The effects of extreme poverty on the enjoyment and exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of those experiencing it;

(b) The efforts of the poorest themselves to achieve the exercise of those rights and to participate fully in the development of the society in which they live;

(c) The conditions in which the poorest may effectively convey their experience and their thoughts and become partners in the realization of human rights;

(d) The means of ensuring a better understanding of the experience and thoughts of the poorest and of the persons working with them".

3. The instructions given to the Special Rapporteur also derive from the following observations made by the Commission on Human Rights and other bodies.

4. The Special Rapporteur submitted his preliminary report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/16) to the Sub-Commission at its forty-fifth session.

5. In resolution 1994/12, adopted at its fiftieth session, the Commission on Human Rights invited the Special Rapporteur to give attention to the interrelationship between the family, combating extreme poverty, and observance of the human rights of the poorest.

6. On 8 December 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 44/82 proclaiming 1994 as International Year of the Family. In his introductory report (A/44/407) the Secretary-General echoed the observations made by Member States and non-governmental organizations in describing poverty as one of the major problems facing numerous families throughout the world. He stated that "activities undertaken ... should seek to promote the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms accorded to all individuals" and that "programmes should support families in the discharge of their functions, rather than provide substitutes for such functions: they should promote the inherent strengths of families". He also reasserted that the family was the basic unit of society and that the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to it in order for it fully to assume its responsibilities within the community.

7. As indicated in his preliminary report (para. 30), the Special Rapporteur anticipates basing his study on:

(a) The answers to questionnaires addressed to United Nations bodies and agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, States and non-governmental organizations;

(b) All reliable sources, including works by authoritative persons;

(c) The results of the consultations conducted in the field by the non-governmental organizations, to which he attributes great importance;

(d) The work of the seminar on the topic "Extreme poverty and denial of human rights".

8. A note verbale and questionnaire on the subject were sent by the Special Rapporteur to Governments, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

9. The Special Rapporteur was very pleased with the replies received from a number of intergovernmental organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies. Some important contributions were also received from Governments; on the whole, however, the number of replies received from Governments was small. Similarly, some important contributions were received from non-governmental organizations, of which he would especially like to mention the contribution by the International Movement ATD Fourth World. Also in this category, however, the number of replies was rather small.

10. The Special Rapporteur would like to reiterate his invitation to all addressees of the note verbale and questionnaire to reply so as to enable him to incorporate their views and opinions in his report.

11. The Special Rapporteur is in the process of establishing a bibliography on extreme poverty and human rights. It will include not only documentation from United Nations sources, but also academic literature and press reports. The bibliography, to be published as an annex to next year's report, will include various approaches to the subject, including the social, economic, historical and legal.

12. The consultation in the field is still under way. The first replies from non-governmental organizations emphasize that such a process takes time and that they have not been able to reply in time for the present report, although they expect to be able to do so for 1995.

13. In resolution 1994/12, the Commission on Human Rights approved the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur relating to the organization of a seminar on extreme poverty and denial of human rights, whose aim would be to give special attention to the living conditions of individuals and families living in extreme poverty.

14. The topics so far proposed to the Special Rapporteur for the agenda of the seminar are as follows:

(a) A debate on the living conditions of individuals and families in extreme poverty;

(b) The extent to which poverty is a denial of human rights. What can we learn from the poorest about the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights?

(c) Lessons to be drawn from the experience of the poorest in their efforts to combat extreme poverty: the need for and conditions in which they can participate in combating extreme poverty and in taking decisions in the society within which they live.

Other subjects may be addressed at the request of participants.

15. This seminar should for the first time permit a direct dialogue between families living in extreme poverty and the representatives of organizations working with them and the Special Rapporteur, other human rights experts, specialists in efforts to combat extreme poverty and representatives of international organizations.

16. In resolution 1994/12, the Commission on Human Rights expressed the wish that the seminar should take place around 17 October, the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty. For that reason, the Special Rapporteur suggests that the seminar be held from 12 to 14 October 1994, at United Nations Headquarters, in connection with the activities planned for that day. From 25 to 30 participants are expected.

17. The Special Rapporteur hopes to be able to prepare a document on the results of the seminar, which could be transmitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-first session in February 1995 and to the World Summit for Social Development, due to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995.

I. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITION OF EXTREME POVERTY

A. Terminology

18. The majority of studies dealing with the phenomenon of poverty distinguish between extreme poverty and poverty on the basis of quantitative criteria. Accordingly, extreme poverty, which is the subject of this study, is variously referred to as "absolute" poverty, "extreme" poverty, "critical" poverty, as "indigence", "deep" poverty or "want", but always as an extreme category within poverty. Although he believes that these terms cover more or less the same concept, the Special Rapporteur has adopted the terminology employed in the resolution establishing his mandate, i.e. "extreme poverty".

19. The only purpose of standardizing terminology is to make it easier to pinpoint a phenomenon in respect of which a wide variety of approaches has been adopted, depending on the organization or body concerned. Needless to say, this in no way excludes the need for a definition of extreme poverty from the human rights angle for the purposes of this study.

B. Definition

20. In his report to the General Assembly on "International cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries" (A/46/454), the Secretary-General made the following observation, which is just as relevant today:

> "There is no precise and consistent definition of poverty, but the term, as applied to developing countries, has generally had an inescapable connotation of physical want. Those described as 'poor' are persons and families who are obliged to struggle continuously in order to save themselves and their dependants from hunger and assure themselves access to other fundamental human needs. Among such groups are smaller numbers of the extreme and more vulnerable poor who have temporarily or forever lost the battle, thus sinking into dire want and destitution."

21. For their part, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and international organizations also seek to define poverty and to identify indicators for measuring it.

World Bank

22. In its "World Development Report 1990: poverty", the World Bank defines poverty as "the inability to attain a minimal standard of living". It takes the view that household incomes and expenditures per capita are adequate yardsticks for the standard of living provided other dimensions of "welfare" are included, such as life expectancy, under five mortality and school enrolment rates. On this basis, the World Bank establishes two levels of household expenditures: the expenditure necessary to buy a minimum standard of nutrition and other basic necessities, and the expenditure required in order to participate in the everyday life of society.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

23. In "Regional project for overcoming poverty, development without poverty" (1991), UNDP defines poverty as a state that makes it impossible for an individual or a family to satisfy one or more basic needs and to participate fully in the life of society.

24. In its 1993 "Human development report", it defines the poverty line as "that income level below which a minimum nutritionally-adequate diet plus essential non-food requirements are not affordable".

25. In the same report, UNDP presents in detail a "human development index" while drawing attention to its limitations. It combines life expectancy, the level of education and adjusted real GDP per capita. This is an innovative approach in that it is not restricted simply to economic factors, but introduces social and qualitative ones.

26. Even though the Special Rapporteur has not yet received the various UNDP studies on "critical poverty", in chapter IV concerning the work of international organizations, he refers to the positive impact of the concept

of human development on the reorientation of international cooperation in areas of human priority, particularly the efforts to combat poverty which have become one of UNDP's six current priorities.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development

27. According to the "Report on the World Social Situation 1993" (ST/ESA/235, E/1993/50/Rev.1) a person may be considered poor "if the total of his/her income earnings from the various assets he/she commands - such as land, capital and labour - do not allow that person a minimum nutritionally adequate diet and other essential non-food requirements."

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

28. In the report on the work of the Third Regional Conference on Poverty (1992), ECLAC takes up UNDP's definition of poverty. As for poverty indicators, the Latin American countries freely use the notion of a "poverty line". This is determined by identifying minimum food requirements and calculating their cost on the basis of actual consumption in each country and of each region within a country. A person (or family) whose income is below this amount is classified as "extremely poor". It thus represents a measure of extreme poverty.

29. To arrive at a measure of poverty (or poverty line), ECLAC multiplies the amount that represents the line of extreme poverty by a factor selected on the basis of the ratio recorded between total household expenditure and expenditure on staple foods by households that satisfy their nutritional requirements (as a rule, this factor is 2, or 1.75 in some rural areas).

30. Another more complex method - which has been employed in Chile - is to combine the poverty line with certain indicators (for example, for Chilean urban areas, the sewerage system, the availability of water and electricity, the type of housing, standard of construction, crowding within the dwelling): this is known as the integrated measure of poverty.

31. To conclude, measuring poverty is a complex task. Income and consumer expenditure are the criteria most commonly employed to distinguish between the extremely poor, the poor and the non-poor. Expenditure on food requirements is by far the most important component in effecting this calculation. However, the organizations referred to above seem to be increasingly convinced of the need to take into account factors of a more qualitative nature, and in particular participation in the life of society.

32. In his next report, the Special Rapporteur intends to complete the inventory of the definitions and concepts employed by the various competent institutions. Whatever the case, for the purposes of this study, a definition of extreme poverty must at least meet the criteria cited in paragraph 32 of his preliminary report.

II. THE EVIL OF POVERTY

A. The scale of the phenomenon of poverty

33. In his preliminary report, the Special Rapporteur stated his intention of devoting this chapter to measuring the extent of poverty, describing its overall features and assessing the seriousness and topicality of the problem.

34. In order to determine the number and percentage of people living in poverty, he has for the time being had to rely on the small number of studies available on the subject and the scanty statistics, which are moreover incomplete.

35. From the outset, the striking feature is the universality of the phenomenon, which affects all continents regardless of the size of countries, and even, in some cases, their level of development, thereby demonstrating the extent to which efforts to combat poverty are of concern to all mankind.

36. According to a study on poverty published by the World Bank in 1990, 1/ over 1,100 million people throughout the world live in a state of poverty, more than half of them, approximately 600 million, in a state of extreme poverty. The poverty line drawn by the World Bank represents a level of consumption of less than $370 per person per year, and the line falls to $275 in the case of extreme poverty. According to the same source, almost two-thirds of these 600 million people live in Asia, 120 million in sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in the Middle East and north Africa and 50 million in Latin America (see the table of poverty, annex III).

37. The disturbing feature is not only the scale of the phenomenon, but the fact that it is spreading. During the 1980s, the only region where the number of poor declined in proportional terms was Asia, on account both of the improvement in the situation in India, Pakistan, China and Indonesia and of the spectacular growth of the economies of the four "dragons", Malaysia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. In contrast, during the same period poverty worsened considerably in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America. Gross per capita product declined by 12 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and by 11 per cent in Latin America. If other economic variables are included, real income in Africa declined by 22 per cent and in Latin America by 16 per cent.

38. According to a preliminary study carried out in May 1990 by ECLAC, during the same decade, the decline in the income of the region's poor, especially its extremely poor, was proportionally greater even than the decline in per capita income. In a more recent study 2/ presented at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in June 1993, ECLAC reported a sharp increase in poverty, noting that in 1980 136 million Latin Americans, i.e. 41 per cent of the total population of Latin America, lived below the poverty line, whereas by the end of the decade the number of persons below the line had risen to 195 million, i.e. 45 per cent of the population. Even more disturbingly, the percentage of persons in extreme poverty (or indigent, to use ECLAC's terminology) rose from 19 to 22 per cent.

39. Beyond the figures, which, in the Latin American context, indicate that the trend towards decline in poverty noted between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the 1980s has come to an end and been replaced by an increase in poverty, the striking feature is the inadequacy of traditional economic parameters in defining the phenomenon. Experience has shown for example that economic growth does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with a proportional decline in poverty. On the contrary, even in countries which have experienced economic growth, both poverty and extreme poverty have risen at the same time. This reveals that so important and decisive a factor for a country's economy as its growth is by no means the only parameter for measuring the decline in poverty or the only means of combating it.

40. A number of macroeconomic measures such as structural re-adjustment, which have developed in order to remedy the situation and which have indeed led to a degree of improvement in the economies of some countries, have in most cases only exacerbated the phenomenon of poverty and aggravated the circumstances of the poorest. This distressing fact has led to some rethinking of the policy pursued by some international economic and financial agencies and resulted in a genuine awareness within the United Nations system. This has been translated into efforts to coordinate the preparation of poverty eradication policies, support for vulnerable groups and even assistance with the execution of structural adjustment programmes. This latter item will be examined in greater detail in chapter IV, which deals with the work of national and international agencies and organizations on extreme poverty.

B. Living conditions of people in extreme poverty

41. Disturbing as it may be, this unhappy picture of poverty is nevertheless inadequate to convey the full truth of the situation endured by millions of people who are condemned to live out an existence marked by precariousness, insecurity, exclusion and denial of the exercise of the most basic human rights.

42. In accordance with the instructions given to him by the Commission and Sub-Commission, the Special Rapporteur intends to adopt an entirely empirical approach in continuing his study, by directly consulting the poorest and those working with them. However, as he has not been able to gather sufficient evidence from such sources, it is not possible in this report to provide a complete and detailed insight into life under conditions of extreme poverty, as experienced by the poor themselves. He nevertheless hopes to be able to do so in his second interim report, and in that connection would like to make an urgent appeal to the persons consulted, and again emphasize the importance to him of first-hand information in order to consider the phenomenon from the human rights angle.

43. Meanwhile, from the accounts he has received, he is already able to identify a number of constants on the basis of actual experience, albeit in a variety of situations: urban or rural environments, industrialized or developing countries, etc.

44. A number of accounts clearly show that the poorest are frequently compelled to wander from place to place. Most of the time they find only insalubrious dwellings in which to settle, sometimes illegally. It is not

uncommon for them to have nowhere to go other than the street, to live in a cemetery among the graves or to shelter under a bridge. A number of accounts describe dangerous places - sheds along a railway track or huts on the edge of a ravine, where there is a risk of being carried away by mud slides whenever it rains heavily - places not recognized by society, which do not provide access to a range of services (this concept obviously varies from one country to another and from one region to another, and we are referring to the services to which the rest of the population normally has access).

45. This population, which lacks training and has only a low level of education, will not be able to find employment or at best will find extremely arduous jobs - which jeopardize their health, are poorly paid and provide no security either to the individual or to his family. Under such circumstances it is usually necessary for everyone, including the children, to work in order to meet the needs of the family as a whole.

46. These accounts by the poorest show that living and working conditions have direct repercussions on their health: illness is part of daily life. Moreover, it has been ascertained that life expectancy is less among the most underprivileged sectors of the population than for the rest of society.

47. Several accounts raise the question whether it is possible for a child who lives in extreme poverty to receive a normal schooling. Needless to say, poor health, and housing and living conditions as a whole, together with the fact that parents themselves have not been able to study, make school attendance uncertain. As a result the poorest have no access to schools, hospitals or other public facilities. There is another important factor: unfamiliarity with these facilities leads to fear. However, the main concern of several non-governmental organizations working with the poorest is how the poorest can pluck up the courage to approach these facilities when they know that they will be criticized for their clothes or demeanour, made to feel that they express themselves badly and that they can not be understood. How can they pluck up the courage to send a child to school when they know he will be singled out because his appearance and attitude bear the stigma of poverty and there is even the risk that he will be taken away from his family without it even being consulted.

48. This vicious circle of poverty means that virtually all the energy of the extremely poor is devoted to the struggle for survival, leaving little room for an enriching cultural and social life.

49. The poor are disregarded because they are not deemed worthy of attention and as a whole, as citizens, they are neither associated with decision-making nor called on to exercise responsibilities within the community.

50. What emerges from the accounts gathered in various regions of the world is that this disregard and lack of understanding frequently suffered by the poorest mean that they in turn occasionally do not bother to make use of services or assistance which have nevertheless been established for them. They do so in order to avoid the risk of being humiliated or to preserve their private or family life from threatening interference. Such conduct weakens the bonds that an individual normally forms with his family and social environment and may even sever those bonds.

51. As the monographs prepared by the Mouvement international ATD Quart Monde 3/ show, when the history of a family living in poverty is retraced over several generations, it frequently becomes apparent that, however far back one goes and whatever the changes take place in the social context, the family has always lived in poverty or extreme poverty.

52. When a child is born in poverty, when his parents have received no education and he is surrounded by adults who have no regular employment, when he grows up in an environment whose educational and other structures are absent or defective and when he has to share responsibility for his own survival, everything conspires to prevent him from enjoying an education, good health and proper care, all of which will have detrimental repercussions on his upbringing and subsequently on his capacity to attempt to break out of this situation.

53. In conjunction with other factors, such as the phenomenon of exclusion with its adverse consequences for participation in the decision-making process at all levels, these circumstances help to create an authentic vicious circle of poverty.

54. Despite their incompleteness, these initial observations are based on accounts from all five continents. 4/ They show that even though extreme poverty may take on a different face in different contexts, the effects on the individual and his family are similar: unbearable living conditions which hamper participation in social and cultural life, which constantly threaten to destroy the family and which seriously undermine individual dignity. All the accounts available agree on one other point: the poorest do not resign themselves to poverty. With means that are occasionally derisory, they do their utmost to combat their situation.

55. The Special Rapporteur intends to use this reading of the reality of poverty as a basis for examining its impact on the enjoyment and exercise of human rights as a whole and on the indivisible and interdependent nature of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights.

C. The causes of extreme poverty and policies to eradicate it

56. When the preliminary report of the Special Rapporteur was considered at the forty-fifth session of the Sub-Commission, members of the Sub-Commission suggested that the Special Rapporteur should consider in his next report making a specific analysis of the reasons for the concentration of wealth in small groups in every country and examine appropriate national and international policies to tackle the problem of extreme poverty (E/CN.4/1994/18, para. 8).

57. As far as international policies to tackle extreme poverty are concerned, the Special Rapporteur intends to continue to describe them in chapter III, in the course of reviewing of the work of the various competent bodies. The description of national measures will clearly depend on the information provided by States.

58. In addressing the issue of wealth concentration and the problem of disparities in income distribution, the Special Rapporteur will draw on the

findings of the working document on "Human rights and income distribution" entrusted to Mr. Asbjørn Eide by the Sub-Commission (resolution 1993/40). These data will better enable the Special Rapporteur to review the various causes of extreme poverty and to take note of the various factors that are considered to have a significant impact on the phenomenon.

III. WORK OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ON EXTREME POVERTY

59. In this part of the report, it was the Special Rapporteur's intention to review the replies received from States, United Nations organs and bodies, as well as from other relevant regional or national sources.

60. It is well known that, in recent years, the international community has been increasingly concerned about the issue of poverty and extreme poverty. This has been reflected in the implementation of a variety of programmes to combat poverty, consideration of its causes and the means of eradicating it. Although the information available is still incomplete, in this report the Special Rapporteur will provide a summary of the information made available to him by United Nations organs and specialized agencies, as well as by other international organizations.

A. United Nations bodies

1. General Assembly

61. Besides resolutions 46/121 and 47/134, entitled "Human Rights and Extreme Poverty", the General Assembly has considered the question of poverty and extreme poverty on a number of occasions.

62. Following a period during which measures relating to the international economic environment and internal structural adjustment and stabilization overshadowed the problem of social inequality, at the beginning of the 1990s the question of poverty was placed on the agenda for action by the international community. This is confirmed by the importance given to the topic in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the revitalization of economic growth and development of the developing countries, adopted in 1990 by the General Assembly, in which the General Assembly underscores the importance of reversing the current trend towards an increase in the number of cases of poverty in the developing countries and urges the international community to support efforts to halt the growth of poverty and hunger.

63. Similarly, in the annex to the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (resolution 45/199), the elimination of poverty is described as an objective of the highest priority. In the words of the resolution, "it is encouraging that a broad consensus is emerging on strategies to be pursued towards the achievement of this goal". The resolution also advocates "a style of development in which economic progress is distributed as widely as possible", as the best means of creating employment and income for the majority of the poor, and where the poorest and most vulnerable are concerned, it advocates specifically targeted measures and programmes. The resolution concludes, "in the long run, however, economic

growth is needed to raise living standards and eliminate poverty". Meanwhile, the developing countries may mitigate the extremes of poverty, such as hunger and indigence, through judicious social measures.

64. In his report on "International cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries" (A/46/454), prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/212, the Secretary-General provides extremely important information and insights concerning, in particular, the definition and scope of the phenomenon, as well as the efforts of the poorest to combat poverty and the role of the family. The ideas developed in the report have been taken into account in this document.

65. In his preparatory note for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (A/CONF.151/PC/6), prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/228, the Secretary-General notes that "the general objective of the activities of the United Nations system is to improve living and working conditions for all, but especially the rural and urban poor, by increasing opportunities for participation." He also notes that "the eradication of poverty is a major objective of all development efforts." He also emphasizes that it has long been recognized "that poverty is a major cause of environmental problems".

66. On 22 December 1992, in resolution 41/496, the General Assembly proclaimed 17 October each year International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, thereby solemnly consecrating the link between extreme poverty and human rights as a whole.

67. The date of 17 October was not a random choice. On 17 October 1987, a stone commemorating the victims of poverty was laid in the Parvis des Libertés et des Droits de l'homme in Paris, at the initiative of Father Joseph Wresinski, in the presence of representatives of extremely poor families, non-governmental human rights organizations and numerous world figures. On that occasion, a message of support from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read out by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights. The stone, which lies on the very spot where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed 45 years ago, proclaims:

> "On 17 October 1987, guardians of human and citizens' rights from all countries gathered in this forecourt. They paid tribute to the victims of hunger, ignorance and violence. They asserted their conviction that poverty is not unavoidable. They proclaimed their solidarity with those struggling throughout the world to eradicate it."

This statement is followed by a declaration by Father Joseph Wresinski:

> "Wherever people are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. It is our sacred duty to unite in order to ensure they are observed."

68. In 1993, in resolution 48/183, the General Assembly proclaimed 1996 International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. In doing so, it reasserted that "the eradication of poverty is fundamental to reinforcing peace and achieving sustainable development".

World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, June 1993

69. During preparations for the World Conference on Human Rights, the question of extreme poverty was addressed in a number of documents, in particular the Bangkok Declaration (A/CONF.157/PC/59), which affirms "that poverty is one of the major obstacles hindering the full enjoyment of human rights"; the Tunis Declaration (A/CONF.157/PC/57), which recalls that "the international community has a duty to fulfil its commitment to eradicate poverty, which is a major obstacle to any effort aimed at sustainable development and the full realization of human rights"; the conclusions of the meeting "Human rights at the dawn of the twenty-first century" organized by the Council of Europe (A/CONF.157/PC/66); the study prepared by Mr. Hubert Wieland Conroy (A/CONF.157/PC/60/Add.2). All these documents underscored the importance of the links between poverty and human rights.

70. The Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights took up these ideas in two articles. Article I-14 underscores that "the existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and active enjoyment of human rights; its immediate alleviation and eventual elimination must remain a high priority for the international community". Article I-25 affirms that "extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and that urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development, in order to promote the human rights of the poorest, and to put an end to extreme poverty and social exclusion and to promote the enjoyment of the fruits of social progress. It is essential for States to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process by the community in which they live, the promotion of human rights and efforts to combat extreme poverty".

2. Economic and Social Council

71. The document that summarizes most of the work performed by the organs and agencies of the United Nations system is the report by the Secretary-General entitled "Policies and activities relating to assistance in the eradication of poverty and support to vulnerable groups, including assistance during the implementation of structural adjustment programmes" (E/1992/47), prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 45/264 and Economic and Social Council decision 1992/204. The report is essentially based on the information provided by the agencies and organs of the United Nations system and consolidated by the Working Group on long-term development objectives of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. This study draws extensively on this information.

72. The link between poverty, the environment and development is also addressed in detail in document E/1992/27 of the Committee for Development Planning of ECOSOC, dated 12 June 1992.

Commission on Human Rights

73. The Commission's Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, Mr. Vitit Muntarbhorn, has constantly emphasized in successive reports that

the poverty of natural parents is one of the causes of child prostitution, child labour, adoption for commercial purposes and other analogous forms of child exploitation.

74. In his report E/CN.4/1991/51 to the forty-seventh session of the Commission, he stresses the "need for preventive action against child exploitation in the form of satisfaction of basic needs, not only for the child but also for the family, correlative development assistance and a redistribution process to redress social deprivations and malpractices".

75. Furthermore, in resolutions 1993/13 and 1994/12, the Commission called upon States, United Nations bodies and other international organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to give due attention each International Day to the situation of the poorest, who must be the focus of events, taking into account events already organized worldwide since 17 October 1987 around the topic "Rejection of extreme poverty," and invited the Secretary-General to take into account, in preparing the programme for the International Day, the relationship between extreme poverty and the full realization of human rights. In resolution 1994/12, the Commission welcomed the fact that the events organized to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty focused on the poorest.

Sub-Commission on Prevention and Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

(a) Study on the right to adequate food as a human right

76. In his excellent study, "Right to adequate food as a human right" (Human Rights Study Series No. 1) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.89.XIV.2), the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission, Mr. Asbjørn Eide, has brought out a number of points that are highly relevant to this study. He notes that the concern with freedom from want was a source of inspiration from the very inception of the planning, during the Second World War, for the new international order to be created when the War was over but that, nevertheless, millions of people continue to suffer from hunger and malnutrition. He notes that poverty - which is in most cases linked to hunger - is extensive in many third world countries, but that there are also significant pockets of poverty in the developed countries.

77. Mr. Eide's examination of the nature of economic, social and cultural rights and the obligations they might entail towards those experiencing hunger and poverty will be taken into account in this study.

78. In addition, Mr. Eide clearly takes the situation of the poorest people into account in his recommendations to States, asking them to ensure access to adequate food by groups which have the greatest difficulties in achieving food security and to facilitate participation by the least privileged groups in the assessment of needs and the implementation of action plans for food security.

79. The Special Rapporteur cannot but commend these recommendations, for he finds such measures quite appropriate for effectively combating hunger and extreme poverty.

(b) Study on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights

80. The Special Rapporteur, Mr. Danilo Türk, for his part, has included sections on extreme poverty in his successive reports on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. These are the source, as it were, of the interest expressed in human rights and extreme poverty in the Commission and Sub-Commission.

81. In his preliminary report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1989/19), Mr. Türk states at the outset that "Any discussion of the problems relating to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights must start with a discussion of poverty - since it is the poor whose rights are most adversely affected" and that the problem affects not only the developing, but also the developed, countries.

82. He points out some of the essential difficulties in analysing poverty, as follows:

(a) The fact that the poor are generally considered to be "objects of proposed change" in anti-poverty planning, policy and social action, rather than "human beings capable (potentially at least) to master their own destiny";

(b) The fact that poverty is considered as primarily an economic phenomenon, although it is recognized that the problem is more complex;

(c) The need, as indicated by an analysis of the situation of the very poor, to recognize the relevance of action on the basis of civil and political rights in addition to action based upon economic, social and cultural rights. Mr. Türk goes on to state the need for a specific study on extreme poverty that will take all those aspects into account.

83. In chapter III of his progress report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/19, paras. 139 to 215), on the question of extreme poverty, Mr. Türk embarks on a detailed examination of the subject that cannot be summarized here, but whose main conclusions the Special Rapporteur endorses, in particular the following:

(a) Human dignity as a source of human rights, its links with the indivisibility of human rights, the validity and importance of which are confirmed by the daily experience and aspirations of the very poor;

(b) The poverty trap and the denial of human rights it represents;

(c) The need for the very poor to be able to convey their knowledge of extreme poverty, and, more generally, for them to be involved in the promotion and evaluation of human rights for all;

(d) Recognition of the efforts of the very poor in the realization of human rights for themselves and for others, in their daily struggle against poverty;

(e) The danger of introducing a minimum content for economic, social and cultural rights, unless conceived of as "spring-board rights" that can form the basis for combating poverty.

84. In his next report, the Special Rapporteur will study Mr. Türk's treatment of the question of structural adjustments and indicators, together with the conclusions of the seminar on that question that was held from 15 to 19 January 1993 in Geneva.

(c) Study of the right to adequate housing

85. The Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Mr. Rajindar Sachar, dealt with the question of poverty and destitution in the working paper (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1992/15) that he submitted to the Sub-Commission in August 1992. In it he points out that the urban and rural poor of the world have no other choice than to live in slums, shanty towns, overcrowded tenements, and informal settlements or on the pavements.

86. Noting that this situation is most often due to the fact that these people lack a stable and adequate income, he brings out very effectively the consequences of the deprivation of the right to adequate housing for the enjoyment of other rights: "In many countries homeless people are not allowed to vote, have little or no right to social welfare because they lack an address, often have difficulties finding employment and generally represent the sector of society with the worst conditions of physical health."

87. This vicious circle appears to be characteristic of extreme poverty.

B. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies

88. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies are devoting increasing attention to the problem of poverty and extreme poverty in connection with their analyses of the impact of the structural adjustment policies on the sectors of the population concerned.

89. This new approach began with an innovative UNICEF publication entitled "Adjustment with a human face", which came out in 1987, and with other factual and analytical studies conducted by the World Bank and UNDP in cooperation with a number of countries of sub-Saharan Africa as part of the programme on the social aspect of the structural adjustments. It then spread to the work of the system as a whole.

1. United Nations Childrer's Fund (UNICEF)

90. The Special Rapporteur awaits with interest UNICEF's reply to the questionnaire, since UNICEF is an organization that has traditionally allocated a large part of its resources to the survival, protection and development of children and has made a point of directing its activities towards the poor and neediest sectors. Its lengthy and valuable experience has enabled it to speak authoritatively on the importance of participation by the poor in preparing and implementing measures designed to alleviate poverty.

2. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

91. Noting that there was a world consensus on the need to combat poverty, UNCTAD established a Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation. The Committee's principal goal is to contribute to national and international

efforts to prevent, alleviate and reduce poverty, in particular where it is the most acute, and to formulate related national and international policies that take account of the diversity of countries' situations and the special problems of the least developed countries and the most vulnerable population groups. The Committee's underlying philosophy is that people must be helped to understand that absolute priority should be given to combating poverty, that the struggle against poverty is in the interests of all, poor and rich, donors and beneficiaries, at national and international level. It is in everyone's interest for the poor no longer to be considered as a dead weight, for their potential to be recognized and for them to receive the encouragemer and means they need in order to participate in development. The Committee hopes to be a forum for exchange and analysis of experience gained in alleviating poverty and for designing projects that can be brought into general use and yield lasting results. It attaches great importance to the potential contribution of the non-governmental organizations with experience in this field. 5/

3. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

92. UNDP considers the elimination of poverty to be closely linked to the achievement of its human development objectives. Human development requires, in particular, income generation, the creation of job opportunities and greater access by the poorest and most vulnerable groups to health care, nutrition, education, training and housing. There is no doubt that this new approach to poverty is based on the concept of human development, which has introduced very significant changes in the orientation of international cooperation, for which reason we should like briefly to discuss the content and impact of this new concept.

93. Traditionally, the concept of development has had an eminently economic connotation. It defined a country's growth and was regularly expressed in figures, percentages or mathematical formulas. Thus, for many years, both politicians, and economists and development planners used average per capita income as an indicator of a country's progress or decline. Consequently, many national development activities centred exclusively on economic growth, frequently ignoring the human dimension of development and the positive impact of social investment on the acceleration of such growth.

94. In recent years, however, this extremely "economic" approach, which somewhat schematically identifies "economic growth" with "development", has begun to be revised and an extremely interesting debate has begun in various spheres of international life. Thus, for example, the most recent UNDP reports on human development reflect this salutary change. In these reports, economic growth is added to other basic human indicators, such as life expectancy, adult illiteracy and infant mortality, so as to constitute the overall concept of human development. What has in fact been done is to incorporate new development evaluation parameters which are as reliable as the previous parameters, but far more revealing of the real economic, social and cultural progress of peoples.

95. This attempt at clarification stems from a fact which is as true as it i verifiable: not all economic growth necessarily brings with it well-being for

the whole population. On the contrary, it happens with regrettable frequency, that progress achieved in that indicator is not in practice reflected in equal benefit for all sectors of society.

96. For these reasons, and in order to define the concept of human development even more closely, growth must be viewed not only in quantitative terms, but also in qualitative terms. Account must be taken not only of economic expansion, but also of the equitable distribution of its results. In addition, development must be "sustainable"; in other words, the satisfaction of current needs must be effected through rational and appropriate use of existing natural resources, without jeopardizing the supply or destiny of future generations.

97. In line with the approach already adopted in the various specialized human rights organizations, for UNDP the participation of the population in decision-making is one of the essential ingredients or engines of development. This statement implies, inter alia, that development must be the development of people, by people and for people; in other words, development must be built around people, and not people around development.

98. In short, the concept of human development could be said to be based on a simple and fundamental conclusion: if the aim is to evaluate objectively a country's level of development, in addition to its economic growth, we must examine the extent to which all its inhabitants have genuine access to the effective exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights, participate in political affairs and fully exercise freedom.

99. As can be seen, the merit of this approach is twofold because it incorporates all human rights as an indissoluble component of development and because it goes beyond the traditional scope of technical and economic cooperation by incorporating the social aspect and the areas of human priority in its principal goals and objectives. From 1992 to 1996, therefore, UNDP will focus its attention on the elimination of poverty through popular participation in development and support for the community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations and governmental agencies working to meet the needs of the poor. This also explains why the elimination of poverty is one of the six main priorities of the fifth programming cycle.

100. As we shall see, this slightly fuller and more comprehensive approach to poverty, which takes due account of the social factors of poverty, is also reflected in the work and activities of UNCTAD, UNICEF, ILO and other agencies of the United Nations system.

4. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

101. In its various activities, UNEP notes that the deterioration of the environment is among the main causes of poverty. Its strategy, "Caring for the Earth", recognizes the vital importance of achieving sustainable development through the appropriate and rational use of natural resources. With regard to ecologically sustainable development and the problem of poverty, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development stated, at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, that it is especially important boldly to combat the vicious circle

of poverty in which millions of human beings are mired, which forces them to solve the daily problem of survival by destroying the environment and the basic resources on which their lives and future welfare depend, and in turn increases environmental risks at world level.

5. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

102. In order to contribute to the alleviation of poverty through effective population policies and programmes, UNFPA has proposed a long-term strategy, to be participated in by Governments and international agencies and aimed at reorienting expenditures towards the social sectors, in particular primary health care, including family planning. The activities receiving UNFPA support have principally been directed towards the least-developed countries and the low-income groups, especially women of child-bearing age.

6. World Food Programme (WFP)

103. WFP's main goal is to channel food assistance into alleviating hunger and poverty. At the same time, it seeks to integrate the poor into the workforce. The goal of some of the projects is to provide the poor with greater income opportunities through the exchange of work for food or other more lasting benefits such as the building of infrastructure, teaching of techniques, primary health care, education, environmental protection, etc.

7. Regional economic and social commissions

104. At the regional level, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have devoted many of their activities to developing methods for measuring and assessing poverty and to formulating policies and programmes for eliminating it. With ECLAC's cooperation, three regional conferences on poverty have already been held: the first at Cartagena, Colombia, in 1988, the second at Quito, Ecuador, in November 1990 and the third at Santiago, Chile, in November 1992.

8. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

105. At the first consultation on extreme poverty organized by the Secretary-General, Habitat drew attention to the problem of the urban poor. It noted that poverty is not expressed or measured in monetary terms alone. The many facets of poverty can be seen in the deplorable conditions in which the poor live: inadequate housing and services, very limited access to paid jobs, unsatisfactory level of health, low literacy rate, lack of social security and very often no rights over the land they occupy. According to Habitat, an integrated approach to community development must be adopted in order to reduce poverty and make a lasting improvement to the living conditions of the poorest sectors.

9. International Labour Organisation (ILO)

106. ILO considers that policies aimed at achieving greater growth, creating jobs, developing infrastructure, and providing access to health care, education and training, together with balanced programmes for development of the rural and the informal sectors, are essential for reducing poverty.

107. Accordingly, it has made the anti-poverty struggle one of its three major priorities for the future and, in close cooperation with the World Bank and IMF, is conducting social assistance programmes to alleviate the possible negative effects of structural adjustment policies.

10. United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

108. FAO has closely followed poverty trends in rural areas and has put into effect many programmes to alleviate it, especially as part of the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Rome in July 1979. FAO's work reflects a combination of several complementary spheres of action: promotion of production and growth in the agricultural sector, especially among the small producers; promotion and technical assistance to provide the poor with greater access to production resources; development of human resources among the poor through the implementation of food policies and nutritional measures; promotion of food security programmes, especially those that provide for greater participation by the poor, etc.

11. World Health Organization (WHO)

109. In view of the fact that poverty is commonly one of the determining factors in chronic ill-health and high mortality rates, problems that affect millions of human beings, WHO focuses many of its policies and activities on the consequences of poverty and extreme poverty on health. Accordingly, the basic objective of the Global Strategy for "Health for All by the Year 2000" is to reduce inequalities in health and access to primary health care for the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

110. By implementing this world health strategy, WHO was able to measure the importance of systematically identifying the most vulnerable population groups and the factors that make them vulnerable. This is essential for determining the most appropriate and effective action. Among these vulnerable groups, WHO mentions landless agricultural workers, workers in the informal sector, the unemployed, the urban poor living in slums or shanty towns, refugees and displaced persons.

12. World Bank

111. Based on this approach and after intensive consultations with the agencies of the system, the World Bank prepared operational strategies for poverty reduction, and for financing projects and support programmes for the countries striving to combat poverty. It is estimated that, from 1991 to 1992, 12 to 15 per cent of World Bank loans were aimed directly at the poor.

112. In the social area, World Bank assistance focuses on the most vulnerable groups through food, immunization and primary health-care programmes. The World Bank decided that, in formulating its general recommendations and assistance programmes, it would be guided by an evaluation of the effectiveness of official policies, especially the extent to which basic social services have proved adequate.

113. This new policy of the World Bank is reflected in its 1992 Poverty Reduction Handbook, prepared for Bank staff with a view to improving procedures.

114. For some time, the World Bank has been coordinating with the United Nations system in setting up social action funds and programmes to complement its structural adjustment loans.

13. International Monetary Fund (IMF)

115. Although IMF bases its programmes on macroeconomic policies, it realizes that the adoption of certain measures as part of structural readjustments can have short-term negative effects that require the adoption of other provisions to alleviate them. Accordingly, it began some time ago to pay greater attention to measures to help the poor and vulnerable sectors of the population, including direct subsidies for consumers, public works programmes, protection of social expenditures in the public sectors, promotion of small businesses, food security, family planning and protection of the environment.

14. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

116. This body allocates most of its resources to the alleviation of rural poverty through assistance programmes for rural women, small land-owners and the landless. One of its operational strategies is to encourage participation by recipients in the various stages of the programmes. IFAD advocates the broadest possible participation by women in development, and many of its activities are aimed at improving the role of women in land allocation, extension services and support for access by women to productive resources.

15. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

117. In its activities for promoting industrial development, UNIDO pays special attention to the promotion of small and medium-sized businesses, which help significantly to develop the income-generation capacity of the poor. It also deals with issues relating to women as a means of alleviating poverty and uses sex-specific indicators in project formulation and execution.

Inter-agency cooperation and coordination of activities

118. The progress made in recent years in achieving a broad consensus on approaches for alleviating and eliminating poverty are clearly reflected in improved cooperation and coordination among the competent bodies in this field. For example, the Task Force on Rural Development serves as a forum for exchange of information on the activities of 31 agencies directly involved in the alleviation of rural poverty and rural development. A second important

coordination mechanism is the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, which is made up of the five United Nations operational funds and programmes: UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP and IFAD.

119. Beyond the formally-established institutional coordination mechanisms, the joint implementation of poverty programmes within the system or coordinated between two or more agencies is becoming common practice. For example, in recent years ECLAC has executed major components of the UNDP regional project on the elimination of extreme poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean and has cooperated with UNICEF on the supervision of the objectives of the World Summit for Children, with UNFPA on issues related to poverty, population and censuses, etc.

C. Other international organizations

League of Arab States

120. The Special Rapporteur draws attention, not to the work of the League of Arab States on extreme poverty, but to the League's reply of 17 March 1994 to his questionnaire.

121. In its reply, the League of Arab States drew the attention of the Special Rapporteur to the importance of policy initiatives that should be undertaken but that lie beyond the reach of some States. The League sees development as the core issue underlying the problem of extreme poverty. It remarked: "In our Arab States, the issue of 'extreme poverty' is linked to development, without which it is difficult to achieve culture, health, education, equality of opportunity and technology, nor it is possible to fully exercise other human rights and fundamental civil freedoms."

122. The League suggests the following approach to deal with the issue of extreme poverty:

"(i) The wealthy countries should be called upon to assist the poorer countries and alleviate their debt burdens.

(ii) The financial resources available to the developing countries should be increased.

(iii) Loans should be provided on easy terms by, for example, increasing the time-limit for repayment at low interest.

(iv) International organizations and financial institutions should provide more assistance to support development projects in the developing countries.

(v) Emphasis should be placed on the need to incorporate considerations relating to the right to development in the lending policies of major financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and particular importance should be attached to the transfer of advanced technology to developing

countries and to the need to help them to develop their economies and to improve their international situation in order to overcome their economic problems.

(vi) The developing countries should be provided with expert specialized advice in the field of agriculture and industry in order to improve their productivity, ensure more employment opportunities and eradicate unemployment which, in fact, is one of the main causes of extreme poverty in developing countries and, in particular, in the Arab States."

IV. A HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACH TO EXTREME POVERTY

123. As indicated in the preceding report, there are several studies of extreme poverty mainly from the economic, statistical, social and political or other viewpoints. The specificity of the present study will reside in its human rights approach. Accordingly, the Special Rapporteur intends to work according to the method described in his preliminary report (paras. 51 to 54).

V. THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR'S PLAN OF WORK

124. Depending on the information received in the next few months, the Special Rapporteur intends, in preparing his second interim report, to follow a plan similar to the one he has followed here. He expects, however, to be able to identify some issues for discussion at the forthcoming session of the Sub-Commission.

Notes

1/ World Bank, World Development Report 1990: Poverty. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, table 2.1, p. 29.

2/ ECLAC, Derectos economicos y sociales: Transformación productiva con equidad en América latina y el Caribe.

3/ In "Les familes du Quart Monde, acteurs de développement", study published by the International Movement ATD Fourth World in cooperation with the secretariat for the International Year of the Family, Vienna, July 1993.

4/ Mention should be made of the "Contribution to the study on human rights and extreme poverty" of the NGO Fourth World Committee, made up of 10 or so non-governmental organizations some of which began in 1991 to consult their members in the field.

5/ See documents TD/B/CN.2/2 and 3.

Annex I

Questionnaires prepared for the consultation undertaken by the Special Rapporteur

I. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STATES

(1) Do your anti-poverty programmes contain criteria specifically for assessing the situation regarding extreme poverty? What information does your Government have on this question? Would you be able to provide me with any relevant statistics or evaluations?

(2) Are the individuals, families and population groups living in extreme poverty found in the urban sector, the rural sector, or both? In what proportions? Is extreme poverty increasing? What has been the recent trend? What is the probable outlook for the future? Have you evaluated the causes or factors contributing to the persistence of or increase in poverty?

(3) Have criteria for distinguishing poverty from extreme poverty been established in your country? If so, what are they? Are they economic, sociological, political, etc.?

(4) Does your country have studies or papers by official bodies or other groups on the question of extreme poverty seen from a human rights perspective? Do those documents include any that were prepared with the participation of the very poor themselves or of organizations working with them?

(5) Is the human rights dimension of poverty taken into account in the preparation of policies for eliminating it? How? How has the impact of extreme poverty on the enjoyment of human rights as a whole been measured in the assessment of anti-poverty programmes? What have been the findings?

(6) In the implementation of ongoing governmental or other programmes, are the people living in extreme poverty and the individuals or organizations working with them (NGOs) participating in the efforts to eliminate extreme poverty, in the realization of human rights for all and in the development of the society in which they are living?

II. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

(1) How is the question of individuals, families and population groups living in extreme poverty taken into account in your organization's mandate and in its work and activities?

(2) What information does your organization have on extreme poverty? Does it have evaluations or statistics on extreme poverty? Has it established criteria for distinguishing poverty from extreme poverty? If so, what are they? Are they economic, sociological, political, etc.?

(3) According to your assessments, are the individuals, families and population groups living in extreme poverty found in the urban sector, the rural sector, or both? In what proportions? Is extreme poverty increasing?

What has been the recent trend? What is the probable outlook for the future? Have you evaluated the causes or factors contributing to the persistence of or increase in poverty?

(4) Is your organization looking into, or has it looked into, the specific question of the impact of extreme poverty on the realization of human rights? If so, what is that impact?

(5) Does your organization feel that the increasing number of studies on poverty and extreme poverty reflects a new awareness by the international community of the negative consequences of the evil of extreme poverty on human rights?

(6) Does your organization have programmes to support efforts by the very poor to exercise their rights and participate fully in the development of the society in which they live?

(7) Do your programme evaluations provide useful indications on the ways to reach the poorest and to foster the participation and access to their rights?

(8) Has your organization made specific recommendations for promoting the elimination of extreme poverty through the realization of human rights for all, particularly the poorest?

III. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Objectives

In order to fulfil his mandate, the Rapporteur would like:

(i) To have the point of view of the non-governmental organizations on the connection between extreme poverty and the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms as a whole;

(ii) To survey very poor individuals and families through those who know them the best, i.e. those working with them in the field, to find out exactly how they live and what they think, for a better understanding of extreme poverty and its causes.

A. Questionnaire for headquarters of non-governmental organizations

(1) Has your NGO participated, directly or indirectly, through studies, financing or field work, in projects relating to individuals or groups living in extreme poverty?

(2) In the projects you have supported or implemented, what have you learned about:

(a) The phenomenon of extreme poverty itself?

Are the individuals, families and population groups living in extreme poverty found in the urban sector, the rural sector, or both? In what proportions? Is extreme poverty increasing? What has been the recent trend? What is the

probable outlook for the future? Have you evaluated the causes or factors contributing to the persistence of or increase in extreme poverty?

(b) The conditions for participation by the poorest and the ways to reach them?

(c) What have been the learning methods used: monographs, first-hand accounts, meetings, training courses ...?

(3) Is your NGO looking into, or has it looked into, the specific question of the impact of extreme poverty on the realization of human rights? If so, what is that impact?

(4) Does your organization feel that the increasing number of studies on poverty and extreme poverty reflects a new awareness at the national and international levels of the negative consequences of the evil of extreme poverty on human rights?

(5) Do your programme evaluations provide useful indications on the ways to reach the very poor and to foster their participation and access to their rights?

(6) Has your organization made specific recommendations for promoting the elimination of extreme poverty through the realization of human rights for all, particularly the poorest?

(7) How might such a study be a means of establishing a dialogue between individuals and groups living in extreme poverty and bodies working in the field of human rights? How might it foster a better insight into extreme poverty and help achieve a better understanding of the mechanisms hindering the realization of human rights for the very poorest?

I should be grateful for any information you might consider helpful. If your NGO has members or correspondents in the field, we are including a questionnaire for them in order to make your task easier.

B. Questionnaire to be sent to field staff

1. Description of the study "Human rights and extreme poverty"

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has entrusted me with conducting a study aimed at a better understanding of the phenomenon of extreme poverty and its effects on the exercise of human rights by consulting the very poor themselves and the people working with them on an ongoing basis. It should be pointed out that this is the first time that human rights bodies have established a genuine dialogue with the very poor and the persons working with them to learn directly from them what extreme poverty is actually like and take their deepest hopes and daily efforts into account in combating extreme poverty. It is in itself an event and a great step forward for these individuals, families and population groups, who have never been listened to before, to be consulted in this way. As part of the consultation I have been

asked to undertake, I am sending you the following questionnaire and I would ask you to inform the individuals and families with whom you are working that this study is being conducted and to enable them to participate in it.

2. Questionnaire

(1) According to your experience working with individuals and groups living in extreme poverty:

- What is the impact of extreme poverty on the actual enjoyment of human rights as a whole, i.e. economic, social and cultural and civil and political rights? - what elements do you feel it is essential to include in this study? - in what way might such a study support your efforts and your work with the very poor? - how might such a study help to establish a dialogue between individuals and groups living in extreme poverty and bodies working in the field of human rights? - how might it foster better knowledge of extreme poverty and help achieve better understanding of the mechanisms hindering the realization of human rights by the very poor?

(2) Within the groups living in extreme poverty with which you work, how do you recognize the men and women who are even more destitute, more "worn out" than the others?

- Location of their residence, unauthorized occupation of an area or dwelling, standard of housing and environment, uprooting ...; - physical appearance, bad health ...; - legal obstacles (non-registration in the civil register or electoral lists, lack of identity papers ...); - type of work done by adults, adolescents and children to support themselves, ability to read and write ...; - lack or precariousness of income; - family break-up due to poverty (children taken away, obligation of certain members to travel far away to seek work ...); - negative effects on dignity and the right to respect (exclusion, bad reputation of living area ...); - difficulties of access to and relations with public or private services (education and vocational training, health services, social services, cultural services ...); - other criteria indicating the most extreme poverty in your opinion?

(3) What is your role as regards the very poorest groups? What links have you established with them and how?

- Can you describe the projects that have reached individuals or families living in extreme poverty? Did the group participate in the various stages of the project (design, implementation, evaluation)? What did you do to ensure that the very poor were partners in and benefited from the project? What did you learn from your activities regarding the conditions for participation by the very poor and the connection between human rights and extreme poverty?

(4) Would it be possible for an individual or a family that you believe is among the very poor to describe, if necessary with your help, their life, hopes and efforts to ward off extreme poverty, using, if possible, their own words by: - writing an account of their life; - telling how the living conditions imposed on them go against respect for their dignity; describing what they want for their children and their family and what counts most in life, for themselves and for others?

(5) In your opinion, has your work with people living in extreme poverty enabled you to establish a relationship of trust with them? Has it helped you to obtain personal accounts that provide a genuine insight into the lives and hopes of the very poor? Do you believe other conditions to be necessary?

Annex II

EXCERPTS FROM THE STATEMENT BY MR. IBRAHIMA FALL, ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AT THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE FAMILY, GENEVA, PALAIS DES NATIONS, 15 MAY 1994

"The topic of our meeting today: 'Families, poverty and human rights' is central to the concerns of the United Nations and of the Centre for Human Rights in particular ...

Poverty and extreme poverty, affronts to human dignity, affect all countries and peoples alike, the families of the developed world and of the developing world ...

The reality of poverty, as it is experienced at the individual and family level, is a denial of human rights as a whole, economic, social and cultural, as well as civil and political. One of the primary human rights, after respect for life and physical and moral integrity, is the right to forge one's own destiny, which means especially that the individual must have the opportunity to participate in determining his own future through the future of the community to which he belongs. Those who are marginalized, those who are excluded are often considered as welfare cases and are unable to defend their own dignity. If they are to escape from this situation, the family concerned and each of its members must be allowed to assert their rights, determine their own future and participate effectively in the political, social and economic life of their neighbourhood, their region, their country. For men and women who remain excluded from the benefits of development and who experience daily, in their bodies and minds, the harsh realities of poverty, are in the best position to help us understand what poverty means and poverty's consequences for the family ...

To conclude this brief opening statement, I should like to give you something to think about. I should like us to tackle together the most difficult of tasks, but one that millions of families throughout the world expect of us: to think about the future of the one billion people, the fifth of mankind, who lack food, drinking water and access to basic education and health care. To think of the future of disadvantaged families means inventing new areas of solidarity, at the local, national, regional and international levels. It means mobilizing energies and consciences towards integrating them. It means trusting very poor families, listening to them and making them our partners. It also means believing in their ability freely to invent their own destiny. And above all, it means restoring their pride in themselves.

For, and I quote Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of the International Movement ATD Fourth World: 'Every family is the bearer of a message of hope for the world. Every child, whether rich or poor, is the bearer of a message for the future. Every family, every child, is of incalculable importance for the community, and for mankind as a whole'."

ANNEX III

Table

The extent or poverty in the developing countries in 1995

Region	Extremely poor			Poor (including extremely poor)			Social indicators		
	Number (millions)	Headcount index (per cent)	Poverty gap	Number (millions)	Headcount index (per cent)	Poverty gap	Under-five mortality (per thousand)	Life expectancy (years)	Net primary enrolment rate (per cent)
Sub-Saharan Africa	120	30	4	180	47	11	196	50	56
East Asia	120	9	0.4	280	20	1	96	67	96
China	80	8	1	210	20	3	58	69	93
South Asia	300	29	3	520	51	10	172	56	74
India	250	33	4	420	55	12	199	57	81
Eastern Europe	3	4	0.2	6	8	0.5	23	71	90
Middle East and North Africa	40	21	1	60	31	2	148	61	75
Latin America and the Caribbean	50	12	1	70	19	1	75	66	92
All developing countries	633	18	1	1 116	33	3	121	62	83

Source: E/CN.4/Sub.2/1991/18, annex.

Notes: (1) The poverty line in 1985 PPP dollars is $275 per capita a year for the extremely poor and $370 per capita a year for the poor.

(2) The headcount index is defined as the percentage of the population below the poverty line. The 95 per cent confidence intervals around the point estimates for the headcount indices are sub-Saharan Africa, 19, 76; East Asia, 21, 22; South Asia, 50, 53; Eastern Europe, 7, 10; Middle East and North Africa, 13, 51; Latin America and the Caribbean, 14, 30; and all developing countries, 28, 39.

(3) The poverty gap is defined as the aggregate income shortfall of the poor as a percentage of aggregate consumption. Under-five mortality rates are for 1980-1985, except for China and South Asia, where the period is 1975-1980.